

(~~the~~) First White House of the Confederacy,
Home of Jefferson Davis,
Montgomery, Ala.
Montgomery Co.

ALA
HABS No. 16-624.
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PHOTOGRAPHS &
Written Historical and Descriptive Data
District No. 16

Historic American Buildings Survey
E. Walter Burkhardt, District Officer
Ala. Polytechnic Inst., Auburn, Ala.

Project #^{ALA}18-624
WHITE HOUSE OF THE CONFEDERACY
Across from the South Wing of Capitol
Montgomery, Alabama

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HISTORICAL DATA:

Built in 1840-'52

Ownership:

Colonel Edmond Harrison built this house in 1852. After the Colonel's death, the home remained in his estate until about 1920.

The present owner is the State of Alabama.

Jefferson Davis' Home:

In March 1861, the Confederate Government leased this home for the use of the President. The rent was \$5,000 a year.

Under an Appropriation Bill of March 21, 1861, \$987.58 was paid for furniture for this home. Much of the furniture used by Mrs. Davis was brought by boat from Mobile, after being sent there from the Davis's home in Mississippi.

This house was occupied by the President and his family from about March 20 until the Capital was moved to Richmond late in May, 1861.

The most interesting social event of the first week of the President's residence here was the tea given by Mrs. Davis to the ladies of Montgomery. Altho it was supposed to be a ladies tea, many men were present, for the Southern gentlemen in those days enjoyed much leisure. The costumes, worn by the ladies, were most beautiful. And even the men were said to be decked out in their best. Following is a short description:

"The new home of the new president of the new nation - The Southern Confederacy - is aglow with the flame of many wax candles, with the scent of many flowers, and the softfooted ministrations of well-trained servants. The new first lady was giving the first formal entertainment to the women who formed the brilliant society of the 'Cradle of the Confederacy.' Mrs. Davis, in rich brocaded silk, the wide flowing sleeves, from which drooped

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delicate lace, stood alone, to receive her guests."

Fort Sumter:

From this house was sent the order that precipitated the War Between the States. Le Roy Pope Walker, Secretary of War for the Confederacy, while in this home, sent his famous message to fire upon Fort Sumter.

New Location of Home:

Shortly after 1920, by an authorization of the Alabama Legislature which appropriated the money for the expense, the building was moved from the corner of Lee and Montgomery Streets (this was where it was put when built, also where it was when occupied by Jefferson Davis), to the lot which it now occupies fronting the south wing of the Capitol building.

The Alabama Association of the Daughters of the Confederacy were instrumental in securing the ownership of this building in the State, and also in making of it a memorial to Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy. Today the home is furnished and arranged, as far as possible, just as it was in the days when it was the home of this new nation's President. Much of the furniture used by Jefferson Davis and his family has been collected and placed in the same rooms as formerly. We have here a lovely example of the home of the Southern gentleman of the War period.

Source of Material:

Peter Brannon, Curator of the Department of Archives and History, State Capitol, Montgomery, Ala.

Miss Tucoza Cozart, Mrs. Jefferson Davis Entertains, Montgomery Advertiser, November 14, 1930.

Acts of Confederate Congress.

Mr. Davis' Memoir.

Acts of the Legislature of Alabama.

Revised 1936, H.C.F.

FIRST WHITE HOUSE OF THE CONFEDERACY
Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama.

Ownership:

Present Owner: State of Alabama.

Previous Owners: William Knox.
George Matthews.
Fleming Freeman.
Joseph S. Winter.
Mr. Oalloway.
Colonel Edmund Harrison.
William Crawford Bibb.
Archibald Tyson.
Mrs. R. L. Render, Lagrange, Georgia.
Render Estate.
The building was bought by the State of Alabama and removed to its present site in 1920.

Custodian: First White House of the Confederacy Commission with Mrs. P. A. Travis in active charge.

Date of Erection: Unknown. 1840 — 52

Architect: Unknown.

Builder: Unknown.

Present Condition: The house has been moved from its original location on the corner of Bibb and Lee Streets. It is now located on the corner of Union and Washington Streets facing the capitol. The lot on which it is placed is owned by the State of Alabama. The house has been remodeled, modern equipment has been added, such as electric lights and gas installed, also water. The present condition of the house is excellent.

Number of Stories: Two.

Materials of Construction: The foundation is of brick piers; the roof is of metal with standing seams; the floors are of pine and hard wood; exterior walls are of weather-boarding; interior walls are of plaster; the lattice work to the front between the piers has been replaced with brick.

Other Existing Records:

See: Montgomery Advertiser, for June 3, 1920.
"Photograph, by Tressler, Montgomery Ala.

Other Existing Records: (cont'd)

See: History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama.
Biography by Thomas Owen.

Scrap Book, made by the Sophie Bibb Chapter
of the U. D. C. and placed in the White House.

Montgomery Weekly Advertiser. - 1861.

Weekly Post. - 1861.

Weekly Confederation. - 1861.

Also: "A GLIMPSE OF OLD MONTGOMERY HOMES".
By Varian Feare, (Mrs. E. Walter Burkhardt)

In the Birmingham News, November 25, 1934.

"ALABAMA POSSESSOR OF RICH HERITAGE".
By Varian Feare, (Mrs. E. Walter Burkhardt)

Additional Data: The house is a two story wooden frame, painted white with green window blinds. There is no known architect. It is an example of carpenter craftsmanship; there is no particular architectural merit, but was selected because of its historical value. It was used as the First Whitehouse of the Confederacy. A rental of \$5,000 a year was appropriated by the Confederate Congress. Mr. and Mrs. Davis occupied it from the fourth of March until they left for Richmond on May 27, 1861. An appropriation of \$25, 000 was voted with which to buy a site and remove the house, together with one of \$500,00 per annum for preserving it, this bill was introduced by Senator Brisco; it was approved September 26, 1919.

Source of Material:

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9-7-1936.

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FIRST WHITE HOUSE OF THE CONFEDERACY
Home of Jefferson Davis
Across from the South Wing of the Capitol
Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama

ARCHITECTURAL NOTES:

The White House of the Confederacy was not included for its architectural interest, but for its historical value. The house is a two-storey box-like affair with a one-storey wing at the rear. The roofs are nearly flat. The heavy cornice of bracket-drops indicates that it was built on the border line of the Greek Revival era and the following era of bad taste.

On the exterior the building exhibits probably the outcropping of talent of some carpenter-craftsmen of the time. On the other hand the mantels and stairways of the interior display good early nineteenth century taste.

Source of Material :

E. Walter Burkhardt, District Administrator, HABS,
Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama.

(Revised at HABS Headquarters,
1936, H.C.F.; ~~original sheet~~
~~in field notebook.~~)